The Art of War in Rebuttals

The best defense is a good offense. Strike first; strike hard; no mercy. Take no prisoners. Never let them see you coming. Play like you need to prove yourself every round.

Incapacitating your opponent:

Use strategic intelligence:

Determine your strategy from in-round reconnaissance.

Discover strongholds, potential troop movements, arsenal strength.

Identity your opponent’s strategy from their answers.

Pre-emption strikes, overload fortified positions, the nuclear option.

Diversify your strategy.

Land based attacks; vary answers from the case strategy (line-by-line attack)

Sea based attacks; strategic positional takeouts (torpedo attack)

Air attacks; preplanned aerial assaults against the Affirmative forward areas (off-case positions)

Always Be Closing Doors:

Take the time advantage:

The counter-attack must leave you with options – lots of them.

Every bomb wins the war:

Weapons of Mass Destruction vs. Weapons of Minor Distraction

Find the “choke point”:

Every enemy has a weakness: find it.

No one can help you get over the hump of your own ability if you do not have self-realization. How can you address your weaknesses so that you can improve and not lose big rounds?

Identifying the Tactical Advantage in the 1AR

Look at the map!

Figure out what’s happening on the flow and where arguments are. Doing this is key to determining your opponent’s strategy.

Isolate strategic targets:

Know in advance what 1AR strategies come down to. Figure out what you will extend to win the round, including multiple varied strategies.

Collateral damage: there are times to deploy defensive arguments.

Defensive tactics:

Anti-ballistic missiles: isolate your choke point and fortify.

Anti-aircraft: dealing with overviews, positional takeouts, and case takeouts.

Anti-personnel: advancing forward positions on the line-by-line.

Offensive tactics:

Fortify forward areas. Prioritize the battalions you still have left over the fallen ones.

Isolate your opponent’s chokepoint and destroy it.

Reassess your troop strength and resolve. If you’re losing arguments, don’t make them crucially important in the round, or you will lose.

Before the round, write answers to everything.

Write frontlines for every argument you have written in every one of your cases. You do not have time in four minutes to write answers and figure out how to word them. The four minutes is for organizing the answers you wrote ahead of time.

Generalities

What isn’t crystallization?

It isn’t crystallization if you tell the judge what you won. It is not crystallization if you are only extending arguments from the 1AR. Neither storytelling nor a laundry-list is crystallization.

What do we do operationally in rounds?

Figure out what good debaters do in round, and mimic them. Derive rules from what certain people do to use in our debates.

How do judges decide who wins and who loses?

There are three voting issues. Never run more, but you can sometimes run fewer if you must. Most judges vote based on one argument.

What is crystallization?

Judges consider major issues, not tiny arguments.

Consider whether the issues are important.

How does the argument compare with your opponent’s issues of salience?

Your comparison must admit that there are some arguments you’re losing.

Questions to consider:

Are there are any first order priorities?

A priori voting issues

Theory

Burdens assessment

Are there any second order priorities?

Meta-debates

Individual vs. Society

Means (procedural) vs. Ends (substantive)

Individual defined through the community vs. Individual defined in opposition to the community

Resolutional interpretation

Framework

Value premises – sometimes necessary.

Criteria – if there is a dispute, you must link to both.

Case turns – positionally destroy you.

Are there any third order priorities?

What can I not lose? What argument must I have to advocate for my side?

What must I win? Any argument that is terminal defense or a turn against your offensive strategy must be handled.

Offense generated against your advocacy that could be used to weigh against you.

Execution

Second rebuttal assumptions: take the moment to say, “I will accept whatever is true in the last rebuttal.”

Tagging the arguments: identifying the central issue of the question.

Triage

Assigning impact assessment:

Uniqueness

Strength of link

Identify relative impact at the margin

Determine the level of priority and how important the issue is to the resolution.

Fill in all the blanks about what you’ve said and what your opponent has said so that there is concision in explaining what happened in the round.

Compare Affirmative and Negative.